

Getting the Support You Need

The EC Division includes two types of consultants to assist school districts with issues related to student behavior—Behavior Support Consultants and PBIS Consultants. While related and integrated in their efforts, the differences in specialties offers your EC programs a wider spectrum of assistance.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT CONSULTANTS

These consultants focus primarily on assisting school districts in understanding the disciplinary provisions in IDEA, providing technical assistance for conducting functional behavioral analyses and developing behavioral intervention plans, and administering grant programs for high-need students (PRC-029).

PBIS CONSULTANTS

These consultants assist schools and school districts in implementing systematic, school-wide behavior supports based on behavioral science and implementation science.

So, Who You Going to Call?

The EC Director in your school district is—most often—the best place for school leaders to look for support. These directors work closely with the Behavior Support Section at NCDPI and will involve the appropriate consultants, as needed.



this issue

Behavior & the Principal's Office **P.1**

Coaching & PBIS **P.2**

Revising Policies & Handbooks **P.3**

Facilitative Leadership **P.4**


The Principal's Office: Action or Reaction?

North Carolina leads the way in many areas of education. Unfortunately, we also make the top ten list in an unappealing category...suspension rates for students. The problem of exclusionary discipline tends to affect our student population unevenly. Minority students, males, and students with disabilities are all subgroups that are consistently over-represented in suspension and expulsion data. In fact, while the number of short-term suspensions has actually dropped overall in our state (by about 25% over the last three years), the percentage of those suspensions involving students with disabilities has grown from 26% (2008-09) to 31% (2010-11). This issue focuses on the challenges of leading the programs for students with disabilities within your school by

giving thoughtful attention to behavior support, school-wide systems, and disciplinary policies.

The evidence suggests that this complicated problem might best be addressed through the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) model of problem-solving and tiered systems of supports. In the last decade, PBIS implementation in NC grew from a few pilots sites to over 1,000 participating schools. Even so, the complexity of these behavioral issues requires that well-trained implementation teams receive ongoing coaching support. Our article on page 2 highlights the layers of coaching support that can benefit your school's implementation of PBIS.

Additionally, there are a number of organizational drivers that either serve as facilitators or barriers to the use of research-based behavioral support. In particular, discipline policies and related laws have a significant impact on the disciplinary actions we take with our students.

Though the "principal's office" has traditionally played a reactive role in managing student behaviors, this issue explores the need to provide proactive and solution-oriented leadership. 



Defining Coaching

A recent issue of *Educational Leadership* focused on the art of coaching as a 21st century leadership skill (October 2011). Data coaches, technology coaches, literacy coaches, and PBIS coaches are increasingly a part of the organizational structure in schools and school districts. Coaching encourages changes in practice by maximizing professional reflection and values-based improvement.

Unlike evaluation, coaching centers on the values of the individuals involved, builds from strengths, and highlights opportunities for growth without condemnation of deficiencies. Coaches might provide technical assistance or might simply provide practitioners with structured feedback that encourages deeper reflection about the connections between dispositions, habits of thinking and acting, and outcomes.

Coaching can be a powerful tool for you as a leader and as a model for teams of teachers to work towards improvement as a professional community. For more information, see the October issue of *Educational Leadership* and the resources we have included under the coaching tab on our website.

COMPETENCY DRIVERS



Coaching in PBIS: Multiple layers of ongoing support

Why the most important coaches for your school might not be on the sidelines of a court or field

Change is hard. Implementing systemic reform, like PBIS, means a lot of change. Good coaching helps you and your staff make the necessary shifts of habits in thinking and acting. PBIS in NC outlines a coaching structure that includes multiple layers of support.

IN-SCHOOL COACH

If you are implementing PBIS, an individual in your school should be designated as the "In-School Coach." This staff member is deeply involved in all of the PBIS meetings and training sessions in your building. Also, this person should coordinate data collection and assist colleagues in using the data to make decisions. In many ways, this In-School Coach is your point-person for PBIS in your school. The In-School coach has a deep knowledge about the realities of your school and a strong connection with the stakeholders.

However, this person should also be a link to the district PBIS coordinator and the broader system of coaching supports. The In-School Coach works with external coaches to coordinate implementation evaluations and then respond to the evaluations with thoughtful PBIS action planning. As a leader, the selection and supervision of the In-School Coach can have a strong impact on the effectiveness of PBIS.

EXTERNAL COACH

In order to support the front-line work of your In-School

Coaches, your local school district should provide an external coach or trainer. While the strength of the In-School Coach is her immediacy and knowledge of the specifics of your site's implementation, the external coach is deeply connected to the general research and practices around PBIS. External Coaches collaborate with the In-School Coach to provide perspective and new insight into the challenges and opportunities with PBIS in your school.

As a school leader, you should work with your In-School Coach to make use of the External Coach to evaluate your progress, make data-based decisions, and to research and execute solutions to specific, complex problems.

DISTRICT COORDINATOR


A District Coordinator is chiefly responsible for guiding the implementation for the local school district. By hosting networking meetings for the implementing schools in your district, collecting and analyzing relevant data from implementing schools, and managing the school system's PBIS action plan, the District Coordinator can assist your school by ensuring that your implementation activities fall within the context of broader efforts at sustainable change.

In many school districts, the District Coordinator will also have the responsibilities as the External Coach. If not, you may have limited contact with your District

Coordinator. It is important to recognize the coordinator as a key liaison to the leadership of your school system. If there are policies or procedures at the LEA level that inhibit your school's implementation of PBIS, the District Coordinator can assist you in working toward changes. Also, you should communicate training needs to the District Coordinator so that your coaches and PBIS teams can benefit from continuous professional development.

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Each of the eight State Board of Education Regions in NC is served by a PBIS Regional Coordinator. The coordinator's sole responsibility is to provide expertise regarding PBIS innovations and implementation. These coordinators offer technical assistance to all of the school systems in the region and conduct regional PBIS training. Also, Regional Coordinators work to synthesize the improvement activities of neighboring districts and facilitate sharing of knowledge and resources.

As a principal, your direct contact with these Regional Coordinators will be very limited. However, it is important for you to know that they can help local coaches with particularly "wicked" problems and a wealth of experience and expertise is just a phone call or email away. 


Discipline Policies and Handbooks: Re-VISION

Detailed codes of student conduct and prescribed consequences for violations of the conduct code are standard in NC schools and local school districts. While these codes were developed in order to make the application of rules less subjective, some researchers have found that these codes have had exactly the opposite influence on disciplinary practices (Fenning & Bohanon, 2006). For instance, minority students tend to receive exclusionary disciplinary action at a disproportionate rate, even with the standardized rules and consequences. Since these policies set the tone for the management of student behavior, handbooks and

policies are important structural influences on schools.

One of the most troubling aspects of these documents is their emphasis on reactive and punitive approaches to classroom management. The tendency in discipline handbooks is to list behavioral infractions alongside recommendations for resultant consequences—most commonly, suspensions. Rarely, even with schools that are implementing PBIS, do handbooks include proactive approaches such as strategies for teaching and acknowledging appropriate behaviors. A simple step to improving codes of conduct would be to include proactive strategies

in conjunction with the more punitive responses.

Additionally, in codifying the administrative responses to problematic behaviors, often these handbooks fail to remove bias and subjectivity and, in some cases, actually reinforce cultural prejudices. Since this can occur unintentionally, it is important for all discipline handbooks to be reviewed by a diverse group of stakeholders. Parents, students, and community leaders who reflect the diversity of the community should be involved in the review of discipline codes to assist in establishing clear and fair standards. 

HOT TOPIC HB 1032

Since 2005, House Bill 1032—also known as the Deborah Greenblatt Act—has established the legal guidelines for seclusion and restraint in schools. While this law is neither new nor specific to students with disabilities, school administrators should remain vigilant in maintaining compliance with HB 1032. Since students with disabilities tend to disproportionately receive seclusion and restraint by school personnel, principals and assistant principals should pay special attention to this law in the context of programs for exceptional children.

In particular, schools should attend more carefully to these two areas in the law: the training requirements and the definition of seclusion. Many schools and school systems initially responded to the passage of the law by commencing training on de-escalation and crisis intervention. However, as schools experience turnover, it is important to continually ensure that crisis intervention teams consist of an adequate number of staff members with current certifications.

With regard to seclusion, school staff members may need to be reminded of the distinctions between seclusion, isolation and time-out. While the law does not prohibit time-out, it is possible that some teachers' "time-out" practices actually fit the definition of seclusion. Consider reviewing these definitions with your staff members.

Also, the law's requirement for documentation and notification primarily focuses on incidents of prohibited acts, physical injury, or seclusion in excess of 10 minutes (or the length of time specified in the student's behavior management plan). However, in most cases, a good practice is to include routine documentation and regular parent notification even for the permitted uses of seclusion and restraint. Even when clearly beyond the requirements of the law, such documentation can be helpful for revising behavior intervention plans, adjusting crisis response protocols, and fostering a collaboration with families and systems of support.

For more information on HB 1032, including the full-text of the relevant statute, see the "Hot Topic" tab on the EL website.

Ask the EC Division...

Q: What are alternatives to suspension for students who violate codes of conduct?

A: Exclusionary discipline has not been shown to reduce problem behaviors and may actually exacerbate problems. Within the boundaries of written policies, school leaders should look for alternatives to suspension.

Even within punitive actions, there are practices that are more promising than suspensions. Use of detention programs (during lunch or afterschool), Saturday school, or alternative learning environments might effectively punish students without reinforcing students whose behavior is aimed at avoiding school.

There are also a range of approaches that

actually support behavioral change by aiding students in the development of appropriate alternative behaviors.

Mediation or conflict resolution programs can teach students to resolve conflicts appropriately. Counseling—including substance abuse programs—can help students to address destructive habits.

The success of alternative approaches to suspension depends to some degree on effective primary prevention measures (like PBIS) and collaboration with families and other agencies. For more information on alternatives to suspension, explore the resources on our website under this month's tab for "Ask EC."

ORGANIZATIONAL DRIVERS

LEADERSHIP

Facilitative Leadership: Empowering without Abandoning

- **Facilitative leaders make connections and help others make meaning.** Facilitative leaders listen for and seek to make (or help others make) the connection between what is occurring in a conversation and what has occurred in other places or at other times..... Facilitative leaders also seek to connect comments made by various individuals in a meeting.
- **Facilitative leaders provide direction without totally taking the reins.** When group members do not share ownership of decisions and their outcomes, they are less likely to follow through on commitments. Too often, individuals abdicate their responsibility to the leader; that is, they fail to acknowledge that ensuring a group's effectiveness is the responsibility of all members. In order for groups to realize their full potential, every individual must be concerned with the good of the whole. For this reason, facilitative leaders more often ask rather than tell groups what they need to be doing and help them move forward rather than control their movement.
- **Facilitative leaders balance managing content and process.** Individuals using a facilitative approach are concerned with both what the group is discussing or deciding and how they are actually doing it. They appreciate and understand that the team may need to use different processes to achieve different desired outcomes. An important part of these efforts involves thoughtfully considering how the group might reach a certain result.
- **Facilitative leaders invite disclosure and feedback to help surface unacknowledged or invisible beliefs, thoughts, and patterns.** Call it what you want-the dead cow on the table, the elephant in the room, or the skunk smelling up the place-most groups have certain topics they need to discuss in order to move forward on key decisions and efforts. Facilitative leaders work with individuals and groups to identify and discuss the important issues they may be unaware of or unwilling to address. These may be issues that are perceived as being too "hot" or fraught with potential conflict to be brought into the open.
- **Facilitative leaders focus on building the capacity of individuals and groups to accomplish more on their own, now and in the future.** Facilitative leadership is not just about the immediate task. It is also about helping a group or team learn together so they might become more productive in the future..... This long-term definition of success helps keep facilitative leaders from assuming too much responsibility for a group.
- **Facilitative leaders operate from a position of restraint.** Because facilitative leaders want to maximize others' contributions, they tend to operate first from a position of restraint, carefully measuring what, if any, action they need to take. (Excerpted from <http://www.thepracticeofleadership.net/the-practice-of-facilitative-leadership>)

Issue 02 Webinar: Supporting Leadership Teams March 16, 2012 (1:00pm)

PBIS, like many other initiatives, relies on leadership from implementation teams. This requires principals to be effective at facilitative leadership. Join us to discuss how to support teams without having to chair the committee. You can find the registration link on the EL website.

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exceptional LEADERSHIP

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Other Upcoming Events...

• RESCHEDULED Webinar: Adaptive Leadership & RtI FEBRUARY 29, 2012 (1:00pm)

RtI is a perfect example of an area in which technical leadership is not enough. Join us as we discuss the role of principals as adaptive leaders in implementing RtI.

• Collaborative Conference on Student Achievement – Greensboro, NC MARCH 19-21, 2012

Mark your calendar and plan to have your school, school district, and community represented at this conference on best practices. We suggest that schools be represented by a team to include the principal, teachers, parents, and business or community representatives; however, individual participants are welcome. Superintendents and other district office staff are also encouraged to attend to facilitate district-wide efforts to improve student achievement.

For more information about these events, the articles in this issue, or other issues related to school leaders and EC programs, visit our site by simply scanning this code with your mobile device.

